

THE WRITER & THE SALESMAN

FEBRUARY

15 CENTS

LIFE WITH A CORONA

By Thomas W. Duncan



MOSTLY PERSONAL

Promises Surprises for March Issue



THE REGIONAL COLUMN

By David E. Brinegar



HOW TO SELL EVERYTHING

By Frank A. Dickson



IT'S CORNY BUT IT'S COMMERCIAL

By Charles Carson

HOW TO WRITE • WHERE TO SELL

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Why Hide Your Head From Facts?

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MOSTLY PERSONAL

We have not used a picture on the cover of this issue. Rather than introduce a writer or an editor to you, I want to tell you something of the thinking of your new editors.

Many readers will have noted that this is not the traditional Forecast issue. We have postponed that issue to the March one, so that we could have time to prepare the issue that we would like to give you. And at the same time we will provide you with an announcement of our editorial policy, certain changes in format for the magazine, and an over-all perspective of the plans of the new editors.

The March issue, then, will be our first *banner* one. It's not my intention here to tell you about the new plans. But I can tell you about some of our preliminary thinking.

We believe that the great support you readers have given *A&J* demonstrates that it has long been the outstanding writers' magazine for its concrete help to writers, beginner, amateur, professional, of every kind. We are going to keep it that way.

We believe, further, that the past success of *A&J*—the success which has won its support—rests upon a shared responsibility for the magazine. More than any other kind of magazine, a writers' magazine is a journal of the needs, cares, and vital hopes of its readers. Our responsibility is with your help to make *A&J* the magazine which will give you definite and important aid, encouragement, and faith in your work as writers.

For instance, the Forecast issue. This annual issue has truly been alone and unique among writers' magazines. It has been perhaps the most enlightening and intimate contact provided between editor and writer. As a matter of fact, after our immediate need was met by changing the Forecast from February to March, we have decided that this was a good move for future Forecasts, too. Authors know that editors annually inventory their manuscript holdings at the end of each year. Many editors find that they are well stocked and have to slow down or go out of the market for a month or so at the beginning of a year. Delaying our enlistment of their help until the resumption of buying, we could make the Forecast issue an even better one.

Now the help of editors of every type of publication has been enlisted. Next month we shall be able to put in your hands the best survey of the coming needs that all these editors can give us.

Second, the Handy Market List. This feature, exclusive with *A&J*, has provided, we know, the best market list available to the working writer. We will run it again in the April issue. More importantly, we have decided to re-establish it upon a quarterly basis, as it was so popularly published for many years. And we will make it to the most up-to-date, packed list our readers have ever seen—and publish it, revised and re-set, each January, April, July, and October.

Third, the Tips from Our Readers columns.

These insights into the habits, methods, discoveries, and successes of our friends have added much to the helpfulness of *A&J*. With this issue we are reopening this department and will continue it as much as space will allow. We invite all readers to write us about suggestions which they can pass on to other writers.

Fourth, the date of publication. With this issue we are printing several days before the first of the month, so that the magazine may be in your hands by the month it is dated. This is not merely a shift of printing dates but even more a reflection of our determination to bring you more and more timely material as quickly as possible. Our market tips are stepped up a bit this issue; in the future they will be stepped up even more, not so much in quantity as in timeliness and helpfulness. We will devote full attention and solicit every cooperation we can to provide the best service of its kind to you.

This is a smattering of our thinking about *A&J* at this moment. But March will provide a further statement. I can only paraphrase the editors who buy our scripts—*continued in the next issue!*

Last summer Thomas W. Duncan consented to lecture to the Writers' Workshop at the University of Denver. His talk was called "Life with a Corona," and it proved to be one of the most popular lectures ever given at the Workshop—entertaining and at the same time helpful. I told Tom Duncan then that if I were an editor of a writers' magazine, one of the first things I would do would be to get him to take this out of his notes-for-a-lecture stage and put it down in writing. And now it has happened. I am certain that you will enjoy Tom's iconoclastic but human experience.

Three contributions this issue have been selected for their help to the free lance who writes for newspapers and other non-fiction outlets. David F. Brinegar introduces himself well in his article on the regional newspaper column; and our readers might well reflect that such columns need not be confined to newspapers alone but frequently can develop a rightful and popular place in many magazines. Frank Dickson, in "How to Sell Everything," gives us some down-to-earth help on making writing-use of every contact. And George E. Jones, in "Tips from Our Readers" department, demonstrates the technique of getting interview material through the service of the post office.

When Joseph H. Wherry sent us the manuscript of "Stock Records Simplified," he also sent us a list of magazines in which he had published. Their variety was interesting—a dozen top-flight juveniles to all the air magazines; *The Far East to American Helicopter*. He also said some very kind things about *A&J* . . . but that would be indulgence!

Charles Carson, well-known literary consultant and manuscript critic, has always been a popular contributor to *A&J*. This time he provides us with some personal thinking about writing for radio.

—A. S.

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SM

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THE AUTHOR & JOURNALIST

February, 1950

LIFE WITH A CORONA

By THOMAS W. DUNCAN

If you have ever played slot machines—and there is no more enchanting pastime—you know that once in a great while the revolving drums stop in such wise that three bars line up, and from the stinging innards of the machine there pours forth an abundance of musical silver. I've never been lucky enough to hit a slot machine jackpot, but once I hit another kind of jackpot.

It was a serene June morning; my wife and dog and I had parked our house trailer beside a rented one-room cabin in a California mountain canyon; I was slaving over galley proofs of an immensely long novel I had finished a few months before, *Gus the Great*. It was just an ordinary morning. Then the woman who operated a nearby roadside cafe called that I was wanted on the telephone.

When I took up the receiver, I heard the voice of my New York agent, Willis Wing. He had news, he said. Bad news, of course, I thought; and I braced myself. Then he told me that forked lightning had struck. The Book-of-the-Month Club had chosen *Gus the Great* for autumn distribution, and Universal-International was buying it at one of the most fabulous prices ever paid even by Hollywood. I was wanted in New York at once.

Three mornings later, with the Lippincott editors, George Stevens and Lynn Carrick and Tay Hohoff, I was sitting in Clifton Fadiman's office, discussing some minor cutting desired by the book club. That noon a group of us lunched at the Gotham, and when drinks came, George lifted his glass and said, "To Gus." I was dazed; I'm still dazed. Three months later, at the publisher's expense, my wife and I were living at the Ritz-Carlton, where a dazzling literary tea took place to honor the book; and after publication every critic of consequence praised it; it climbed the best seller lists and remained there a long time; my fan mail was overwhelming. And *Omnibook* and *Liberty* and the *New York Post* used condensations, and the book was published in six foreign countries.

So what? Does the foregoing make me a remarkable fellow? No. Except remarkably lucky and maybe remarkably persistent. It could happen to you, and probably will, to some of you. I've recited all this for the benefit of the chap who has written a novel that has been rejected by every publisher; for the chap with a half-completed novel who has grave doubts; for the woman who has just found four rejected manuscripts in the morning mail; for the rank beginner who is humiliated to discover that the fresh, vital story in his

brain comes out on paper in clumsy and banal prose. I'm your blood brother. I've been there too. I've encountered every discouragement in the book. I've made all the mistakes.

But one mistake I never did make, except for brief periods: I was never defeated. I never lost faith in the ultimate ascendancy of my star. I was going to succeed and that was all there was to it. Editors could fire back as many manuscripts as they pleased but I would write more. I would fight one more round. I would pound and pound and push and push, and something would have to give. And I damned well knew it wasn't going to be I. Not even the most miserly slot machine turns up lemons every time; and I told myself that if I kept dropping manuscripts into the literary slot machine some day there would be cherries and bells and maybe jackpot bars.

In the summer of 1921, as a boy in Casey, Iowa, just turning sixteen, I started to write. The disease attacked me without warning. A few months before, my interest in composition was so slight I was delighted to let others write my high school themes. Then, *wham!* I was infected. I wanted to put on paper some of the stories I saw being lived in that pretty little town.

I sent off numberless manuscripts, in the summer and fall of 1921. They all came back. Having read *Martin Eden*, this did not astonish me. But I wanted to see the color of a publisher's check, so I took to writing short articles in addition to stories. One February morning in 1922, I had a check from *Rural Mechanics* for one of these. They paid a buck. No buck has ever looked bigger. And the next morning, a magazine called *Telling Tales*, which soon thereafter expired as a result of its folly, sent me fifteen dollars for a short story.

That was sheer luck. Only dimly do I remember the story, but the parts I do remember have not a fragrant odor. Why they bought it I simply cannot imagine, unless at the behest of my particular lucky fates. *Telling Tales* was a sex magazine; my yarn was not a sex story; it was a horror story, in which the sole character sat contemplating suicide and then killed himself. But editors are crazy, and when they send me checks I never argue with them.

Presently I wrote an article on raising rabbits, the gist of which was that you buy a buck and a doe and let the great cosmic urges have free sway. I sent it to *Capper's Farmer*. No response. So I sent the carbon to *Successful Farming*, and went away with my parents on a two-month trip. Upon my

return, I found checks from both magazines. The one from *Successful Farming* was twice as large, but being young and callow I thought that editors were honorable men, and I would be honorable too, so I sent it back with a note of apology. Today, I should keep the larger check. However, never since have I sent out two copies of the same manuscript.

I couldn't sell any more short stories, but I liked checks, so in college I took to writing Sunday School paper yarns. I always sent out the first draft, and I always took care that each yarn contained a message against smoking. I couldn't—and still can't—write unless I'm smoking like a stovepipe; moreover, I was a freethinker; but those yarns all sold. That taught me it isn't always necessary for a writer to be sincere.

Illness kept me out of college a year, so I tackled a novel. No beginning novelist was ever more baffled. Far from being able to plot the entire novel, I couldn't even plot the first chapter. But I started writing anyway; not a bad practice; one cannot correct and revise an unwritten manuscript; and somehow or other I blundered through it. I sent it out again and again; no dice; not even letters of encouragement.

After college, I became a newspaper reporter. I went to work at the ungodly hour of 7:30 a.m. At night I was too exhausted to lift a finger, for I've never had much excess energy; I've had to channel and husband my energy. But it worried me that I wasn't writing stories. So, although I despise alarm clocks, I set mine for 4 a.m. and wrote a couple of hours before showing up on the job. I figured that in that way my own work would get the cream of my energy and the newspaper could have what was left. I was never one to feel much loyalty toward any employer except myself.

I quit the paper when a friend who headed a college English department offered me a teaching job, if I'd take an M.A. I took it, tuition free, owing to the friend's influence; but by then it was 1931. College enrollment was nose diving. The teaching job evaporated. So I plunged into free lancing.

I wrote. Wrote, wrote, wrote. And when I wasn't writing I was reading and thinking about writing. I persuaded Bob Hardy to be my agent, and he sold enough of my yarns to the pulps to keep me floating. Then I wrote another novel; a college novel. It was less bad than the first, and Hardy sent it around. We had some nice letters, and one day Hardy wrote me, "You're headed for the big time." That was as good—almost—as a check.

My blood was up now. I became obsessed with the desire to write a publishable novel. So I wrote another, guiltily stealing the time from bread-and-butter detective yarns. Hardy didn't like it. I was dashed. He did keep it for a while, however, and sent it around. Nothing happened. Then my friend, MacKinlay Kantor, who had gone on to New York, asked to see the carbon. He liked it and showed it to his publishers, Coward McCann. Tim Coward said he just might accept it, if I'd do a lot of the seemingly mad things editors always want. I went to work.

Well, I had a May 31 deadline. And in mid-May, for some reason, with only five thousand words of rewriting left, my creative processes went on a strike. I couldn't turn a wheel, tap a key. I was frantic. I mentioned my plight to a clergy-

(Continued on Page 25)

STOCK RECORDS SIMPLIFIED

By JOSEPH H. WHERRY

After over three years of regular writing, I believe I have at last evolved an effective, yet extremely simple method of keeping track of my stock of manuscripts. By this method, which is almost primitive in its simplicity, I can look up any manuscript in a few seconds and determine its whole history.

When I have a manuscript ready to start its rounds I select a standard typewriter size sheet of either pink, blue, or yellow paper, which I staple to my carbon copy as a cover sheet. The pink is for *juvenile* items, blue for *adult*, and yellow for items that may be sent to either classification.

In the upper left hand corner of the covered sheet I type, for example: ARTICLE—Juv., and beneath this: Words: Approx. 800. If the article is intended for a specific age group I enclose figures in parenthesis after the first entry. The third line contains such ready information as accompanying photographs, drawings, and the like.

I center at the top of the cover sheet the title of the item, which I underline. Two spaces beneath I indicate briefly what the article deals with, for instance, Re: Model Airplanes' use in the aircraft industry. At top right I place the date the article (or story) was completed. Sometimes I place below this a list of likely markets for ready reference in the order I intend submitting the item.

All this takes only a moment, and I have found that to include such information on an index card takes much longer.

When the article goes out I write in longhand (for the cover sheet is now stapled to the MSS carbon) as follows, using the entire width of cover sheet:

1) Date Market Person addressed W/Letter & Rect card

Interpreted, this signifies that this is the *first* time the item has been submitted; that it went to so-and-so magazine addressed to Whoozis, the Article Editor; and that I included a letter to the person addressed together with a penny postal to be used as a receipt for the item. Quite often I write a very short note to accompany the article. For such notes I use a sheet from a small 3 x 5 inch desk pad.

Incidentally, the receipt postal seems to be a good idea (and I know other writers use them, too). Of course I address the postal to myself on the front side. On the correspondence side I type something like this:

Date _____, 1950

Acknowledging receipt of your Article.

"Wheelair III-A"

A report will be sent within _____ weeks.

Remarks:

Signed: _____

_____, AIR TRAILS Pictorial

The manuscript goes out, and of course I enclose return postage, etc. Usually within a few days I have my receipt postal back on my desk. I believe this little one-cent postal indicates to the editor that I try to conduct my writing as any other good business should be handled.

If and when the manuscript is rejected, I use my red marking pencil to inscribe a great big "R" to the immediate left of the market on the cover

(Continued on Page 28)

The Regional Column . . . A Natural

By DAVID E. BRINEGAR

The regional column is a natural for free-lance writers, because it has such wide uses and can be written in such varying forms that the opportunities for its capable production and profitable sale are legion.

By the regional column I mean the kind I write myself—a column aimed at the readers of a comparatively restricted area. My own, "The Times in Arizona," which appears daily under my byline, as a feature of John and Anna Roosevelt Boettlinger's *The Arizona Times*, in Phoenix, Ariz., is an excellent example of what I mean from the standpoint of content. It happens I am a staffer, now covering the Arizona State House after a 10-month tour of duty as managing editor. But though my work is not free-lance, I can say, out of my experience as a managing editor, that most editors are always searching for something new and interesting in the way of a regional column. Our own *Times* carries an excellent example of such in Columbus Giragi's "Let the Chips Fall," a free-lance, Phoenix-written editorial-page thrice-weekly feature.

What I say about the regional column is originating not only out of my experiences as a columnist with *The Times*. I wrote such a column, as a weekly, Monday-morning feature (the Monday edition of a morning newspaper almost always can use good feature material) for *The Arizona Republic* in Phoenix for several years prior to my entering the Army in 1942; and I also wrote a regional-type sports column a dozen years ago for *The Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson.

There are two questions you folks who are interested in being newspaper columnists are bound to have in mind. They are: (1) How do you write a column? and (2) How do you sell one?

The column scope should be the territory covered by the circulation of the publication in which it appears. The column will not (at least at first, and probably never) be syndicated. Should it ever reach syndication stage it can be changed overnight to accommodate the wider scope.

My first column, written in Tucson, concerned the sports activities of a small university city of approximately 30,000. Consequently the column contained comment and gossip concerning the sports activities of the community, including amateur sports in the high school and the college and professional sports in downtown arenas. Because sports is a field in which the fan who never goes outside of his own backyard maintains a vigorous interest in Dem Bums or the Yanks or the Cards or some other team a thousand or more miles away, I also included some odd facts and comment on the major national events. However, in general it is wise, even in a sports column, to maintain the regional scope and to let your newspaper's syndicated and wire-service writers like Hugh Fullerton handle the national and international scenes.

I branched wider in my *Republic* column, and still wider in my *Times* column, until now I take in material which has as its limits the boundaries of Arizona. I have attained the delightful, satisfying, zestful status every columnist yearns for—I am able to write pretty much as I please, principally because my name has become known to sufficient

readers through more than 20 years of Arizona writing that my newspaper is willing to print almost anything that isn't libelous or doesn't violate good taste, under my byline. You are not likely to find yourself as fortunate at the start, although you will always find that you can say more things if your name is on a column than you can if you are simply writing articles for the same publication.

The woods are full of possible names for columns. You should choose yours according to the type of material you write and whom you wish to read what you write. My sports column carried the saucy and sometimes apparently flippant title, "Who Cares?" I fell into the slap-them-in-teeth clan of sports writers who measure their success by the irate customers who write in and threaten to stop the paper unless So and So's stuff is thrown out immediately. (They never stop the paper and they are the surest readers the next day.) However, that would hardly be a fitting title for my present column, which, as you can see, contains a play on the name of my newspaper: "The Times in Arizona." For in my present column I swat nobody in the teeth. I just try to write a leisurely, interesting 600 words daily on whatever timely feature material is at hand.

A good, steady possibility for a column title lies in its regional nature itself. You live in Smithtown, which is a pleasant little city by the bank of a beautiful blue river underneath a tall red bluff. I can see the following title possibilities: "The Smithtown Scene," "By the Side of the River," "Just Fishin'," "I'm Not Bluffing," "From Atop the Bluff," "Blue River Daves," "Sit on the Bank with Me," and "Mary Jones Looks at Smithtown." Those are only a few, as you can readily see. Try to think how the column heading will look in the type that the publication uses. Perhaps the heading can be illustrated, such as (in the case of "The Smithtown Scene") with a sketch of the Smithtown skyline as a background for the type which spells out the name of the column and its writer.

Above all, remember as a cardinal point in choosing the name that it must be consistent with the scope and the content of the material.

You might also choose several possible names to show to the editor. He will want to make a choice, and the more evidence you show of knowing what you're talking about the better chances you will have of making a sale.

All right: thus far you have decided on your scope and you've chosen the name. Your scope will be Smithtown and the name will be "The Smithtown Scene." Now all you have to do is write the column.

One of the surest sellers—because it is a sure circulation-builder—is the chatty column containing scads of names. (Even in as leisurely a paced column as my own, I try to get in all the names possible and still have the column read naturally. I also hold-face the names, so that they will catch readers' eyes.)

Do not indulge in malicious gossip, don't try to be cute, don't force your writing, don't write "preciously" or "prettily." Sit down at your typewriter and write two full pages of 8½ by 11 paper,

double-spaced, with hometown happenings concerning hometown folk. For practice, use back issues of your hometown newspaper. Condense every home-interest story (shunning police court news but not shunning social items) into a single sentence with one or more names in it. Here is a sample of such writing:

George Applington has bought the old Brickwood house on Chestnut Street and all the Applingtons will move there early next month . . . Betty Strickland was out showing her friends her new Dalmatian puppy yesterday. It's got a pedigree as long as Betty's glorious wavy golden hair . . . Henry Smackers is looking at travel folders again; he's gone to a different spot every vacation for 15 years and has about run out of places to go. Henry's quite frank about it. "Everything we haven't seen is so far away it looks like we'll never see it." How about just staying home and canoeing on the river this summer, Henry? It's lots of fun . . .

I think you get the idea. You can become limitlessly familiar, in print, with the town's top citizens as long as you do it decently, in friendly fashion, without scandalousness or personal offense, and always in a manner that will let them boast that they once were mentioned in Miss So-and-So's column.

This type of column, I said, is easy to write—if you have the information to put into it. The reason I don't write this way more often in my own column is twofold: I have developed a readership for a certain type of anecdotal narration, and covering a beat does not give me time to get the 50 or more personal-mention items a day that are necessary to get such a column going and carry it until it develops enough readers to draw fan mail.

You, as a free-lance writer, can get the information in two ways: (1) through personal observation

-----!!

There is no longing quite so deep,
So shattering to peace and sleep,
As that which writers all have nursed,
Have borne with pain and often cursed,
While they have cogitated, mused,
Upon a title, still unused!

—CATHERINE E. BERRY

and contact; and (2) through scrupulous scanning of every source of community information, including guest lists, records of property transfers, etc.

I have never tried the idea on a large scale, but it has worked on a small one several times, and it's this—take the phone book and select a score of names and numbers. Telephone them, identifying yourself as a writer and asking simply whether they have taken any trips, had any special events, or done anything else which would be interesting in print. To everyone, the things he does are more interesting than anything else, although there are times when he will not believe so. The chances are that in a sufficient number of instances to write at least one starter column you'll receive courteous, informative answers. These answers may also lead to other sources of information.

If you write historical or anecdotal material, the files of libraries and societies are invaluable, as are the memories of old-timers. Write one such column, telling of the time that Johnny Applesed

fell into the well back of Simpson's place and had to be pulled out by Aunt Miranda McNeil, who used knotted bed sheets and the neighbor's pet cow to do the pulling, and you'll find that pioneers of one vintage or another will be offering you their own reminiscences.

Do not try to be sophisticated. If your stuff sounds corny to you, think twice before you cut the corn out and put in some insubstantial meringue. Don't make it too corny, of course; but keep it flavorsome and local.

Now, how to sell it.

I suggest, from my own memory of what hit me the hardest among the dozen or more such columns which were offered to me during my time as an editor, that you work up your material as clearly and graphically as possible, type out a week's supply of columns (realizing they will never be more than samples and the minute you make a bargain you'll have to start all over with a new batch), and go see an editor.

When you go, find out in advance whom you are seeing. If you don't know the name of the editor, telephone his newspaper and ask the switchboard who the managing editor is. When she answers and wishes to connect you, thank her and tell her you will see him in person. At the receptionist's desk, give your name, state simply that you have some "special material" or some "column material" you wish to show him, and ask for him by name. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will come out in person; though if he doesn't, tell your story anyway to whomever he sends. Whether he comes out or sends someone, try to get him to let you leave your material overnight. This will give him a longer chance to look at it and also will allow you an opportunity to make a second contact with him.

My fellow editors will curse me as a traitor to my class for setting forth the above. But the plain truth is that while I'm giving a lot of you a key to how to waste the time of an editor, I'm giving a few of you an idea as to how to employ his time and yours to mutual profit. See him, call him by name, get him to look at your material as long as he will—up to any reasonable limit, of course, such as a couple of weeks.

Price? State truthfully that price is secondary but that you want something as a token repayment for your efforts. Ask for \$5 a column if he seems impressed, take \$1 if necessary. *But get your column into print.* Then you can bargain for more. With him if he is wise, with someone else if your column is good and he isn't wise and appreciative. At any rate, being able to show a scrapbook on one column will help immeasurably to see a second.

Of course, keep a scrapbook. In fact, keep a scrapbook of every signed and pertinent piece you have published, because editors are accountably impressed by scrapbooks. I say accountably, because a scrapbook tells them immediately that you have found a pattern and that some other editor has in turn found that pattern profitable to print.

There is only one other thing to add. If you are an expert on anything, such as cooking, making babies' playsuits, shoeing horses, training dogs, catching butterflies, or blowing glass, try to write your column on that subject. What you write will carry the ring of authority. It will be easier for you than looking up names or running around asking strangers questions. And there is always a chance that the newspaper may need a columnist with just your special knowledge.

HOW TO SELL EVERYTHING

By FRANK A. DICKSON

The password to the House of Checks in newspaper feature writing is "Circulation conscious."

It will enable you to market practically everything you turn out; I, my wife, and our two sons stand convinced of its magic-like power, for this password has sold more than five thousand features of mine during the past seventeen years.

Step No. 1 is to familiarize yourself with the circulation area of the newspaper to which you are directing your writing products. What counties are covered heavily by the newspaper? It is in those counties that the feature editor and the state news editor are concentrating their stories, because, first, the reader interest seems greatest there and, second, these two editors are bending every effort to outdo newspapers competing in that area. Circulation wars go on forever.

Just as newspaper readers had rather read news concerning their friends and fellow citizens than about foreign events, these readers prefer feature stories dealing with people and things in their county and surrounding counties, as they feel a personal contact that is lacking in general articles and stories written about persons not in the immediate section. If you use subjects in the heaviest circulation territory, you are availing yourself of the password to checks for all your features!

Suppose a local newspaper has a heavy circulation in the city of Brooksville, thirty miles away, where other newspapers are endeavoring to boost their circulation. The feature editor realizes that the more articles published about Brooksville, the better the situation for his newspaper, and the same applies for various other cities in the section as well as the counties.

Moreover, at all times the circulation department of a newspaper is making an all-out effort to increase the circulation, with a large number of salesmen paying visits to practically every house in the cities and counties. One day it might be Brooksville, another day Hickman, and still another day Rogers. In pressing the circulation campaign, the salesmen will want to call attention to a lot of Brooksville material when in that city, a lot about Hickman during the Hickman visit, and a lot about Rogers when they go there.

So the salesmen are depending upon the editorial rooms to give them full co-operation, which means using stories at the right time. The state news editor, receiving his pay from the man—the publisher—who also pays the circulation salesmen, obliges as much as possible, and the feature editor realizes his obligations.

In a nutshell, the feature editor is in constant need of material that is not only interesting but also helpful in the way of circulation building.

The wheel keeps moving: The editorial department supplies the stories that push up the circulation, and the higher the circulation the higher the advertising rates and the better results for the advertiser.

Getting out a newspaper and selling it, and keeping it sold year after year, is plain business, and a realistic approach to the matter is necessary for the feature writer who wishes to market his stories day after day or week after week.

If at all possible, don't write the feature editor;

call upon him and discuss his needs for features . . . features aimed at the circulation territory. He keeps up to the minute with the activities of the circulation department, and he knows exactly where to "put on the steam." If you are a fair writer, can dig up subjects with ease, and if you like people and have more than average curiosity, the feature editor will welcome you with open arms with checks in them. As long as he gives the readers good features, tied up with circulation promotion, he can be certain of his job and may rate a raise now and then. Therefore, a good feature writer amounts to his best friend.

What about subjects?

Once you get the "hang" of subject finding, and it's just a process, the problem will be one of selection and not eternal hunting. And don't be content with an average subject. There are enough splendid subjects running around to last years. Why bother with an average subject when it is not any harder to write an article with far better material?

A jim-dandy subject sells the article itself, because the feature editor knows that the readers will be interested in it; and, anyway, he certainly doesn't want any of the opposition papers to beat him to the story.

Personalities go over best . . . city and community leaders . . . women in the limelight . . . stories behind achievements . . . handicaps who are doing good jobs . . . successes from small starts . . . superlatives in various fields . . . children and youths doing things out of the ordinary.

Humanize the stories, fill them with anecdotes, and let loose with a barrage of quotes. Pack the features with verbs of action. Whenever possible, show progress, for this will appeal to the people in the community where the subject resides. You have got to be a great booster of those communities in which the newspaper circulates.

Incidentally, when you boost a community or
(Continued on Page 20)



"Mr. Watson Will See YOU Now."

It's Corny But It's Commercial

By CHARLES CARSON

American radio is commercial. When a program gets on the air and stays there, it means two things: first, that the stuff is entertaining, and second, that the Juan Doe Soap Company has an item called Slippery Suds which it wants to sell, and you as a writer are selling it. Thus, the program demand stems from the sponsor's end, not from a writer with a beautiful script.

If writers had their way about radio, no doubt it would be elevated to a higher cultural level, for the obvious reason that there is no other direction it could go. But writers are not the people who get programs on the air; they are merely folks who must be hired—and at handsome figures, I might add—to sell Slippery Suds.

I did script for Mirandy, the Ozark character, for three years before she went on N.B.C.'s *National Farm & Home Hour*. One day we were checking a script idea she had presented, and when I protested that it was too fresh off the cob, she said, "I know, Charles. *It's corny, but it's commercial.*" Her argument was final and irrefutable. I have never forgotten it.

Now, let's go behind the scenes and follow a radio program from the inception of its demand to the show's production on the air. As I said, it begins with the sponsor . . .

The Board of Directors of the Juan Doe Soap Company is in session, and the fiscal year's advertising budget is being discussed. Members of the Board don't do the actual advertising; they merely decide how much money should be appropriated for that purpose, business trends being whatever they are. They do not distribute the funds to various advertising media, but merely make the appropriation in a lump sum.

Now, the Board's responsibility is ended, and the boys retire to an adjacent refreshment parlor. The next day we find the problem in the lap of the corporation's advertising manager. He doesn't know any more about radio production than the Board knows, but he has some figures before him.

It is his business to allocate advertising funds where they will bring the best returns, and if there is anything in the previous year's record to point up radio as a growing medium for advertising, more money will be appropriated for that department. Actually, trends of this kind (when they exist) can be traced back to the fact that housewives are listening to more washboard dramas and reading fewer magazines. But the advertising manager isn't too concerned about causes; his judgment is based on the results indicated by figures he has at hand.

At this point you may have visions of the advertising manager out shopping for a radio writer to do the show. That is your idea, not his. He takes

the whole business to an advertising agency, whose business it is to peddle soap (or anything that is sold) *via* the airwaves. Each large agency has a radio department, and it may be added that each agency has its own radio specialty. Some handle big national shows; while others (usually of smaller caliber) take only local stuff. Some decline to take on anything requiring elaborate production, preferring simple fare such as newscasts. However, that is the ad manager's headache, so let's not worry over it—yet.

When the show gets going, the sponsor usually does not interfere, notwithstanding the "information" that has been handed us by experts such as Frederic Wakeman. Any sponsor who has had the good sense to nurture a corporation into maturity isn't likely to go off his base and get hallucinations about being an impresario. He has ordered the agency to sell Slippery Suds. If the agency sells Slippery Suds, everything is o.k. If not, there must be an accounting to the sponsor. No matter how many criticisms are made of the quality of the broadcast, you may be sure that if it stays on the air it is selling the goods.

That, my literary comrade, is what makes you a radio writer—your ability to sell soap! If you sell it, you're a good writer, and if you don't—well, let's not go into that.

Now, the agency has the account. What happens next? A writer comes along—you come along. You have a lovely program, of course. Every writer has a lovely program. But how much soap will it sell? Will it appeal to the average housewife, who buys 95% of all the soap for the Great American Home? If so, is it light enough in tone, flexible enough in structure and slow enough in tempo to allow her to vacuum the carpet and shell the peas while she listens? It may be corny as all get-out, but don't worry—such features usually are.

What I am trying to get across is the fact that a show doesn't get on the air merely because a writer thinks of a novel idea and then finds someone who likes it so much he is fascinated and buys it. The paying show gets on the air because somebody has soap (or a sister commodity) to sell, and you come along and show him you can get people to listen while the selling is done.

(Continued on Page 22)

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ADVISING THE BEGINNER

. . . By ALAN SWALLOW

The Novel Again; Release of Rights; Greeting Card Submissions

The usefulness of this column seems assured by the mounting number of questions asked by readers. With answers to only a few questions possible each month, I can hardly keep up with the demand upon this space. However, if readers whose questions have not been answered here will continue to be patient, I hope to get to all problems of common interest—and also to receive still other questions from many of you.

1. Mr. Fred Reinstein, director of the National Literary Agency in Washington, was kind enough to question my remarks on plays versus novels in this column for October. Specifically he replied to my remark that "the present cut in the number of novels published indicates at least a temporary decline in the usual selling advantages accorded the novel."

Mr. Reinstein says in a letter dated October 25, 1949, "While it is true that the first nine months of 1949 show a drop of 23 titles from the same period in 1948, I am quite certain that book publishers will agree with me that the drop is owing—not to the policies of the publishers—but to the fact that they believe it is more difficult today to get the fiction manuscripts they want."

"Book editor after book editor claims that the calibre of fiction submitted today is lower than he likes and that he finds it very difficult to obtain high-class novels. As Bobbs-Merrill told me, we have to charge more for the novel today and we feel we should give the buyer more for his money. At no time in the recent past has the demand for good fiction books been greater. This is the truth even though it may seem to many that the novels that do get published are hardly exceptional. . . . This situation, the poor quality of fiction, is just as true in the magazine field. From the top slicks all the way down to the pulps the editors are crying for better stories. . . . New writers in any field of fiction should be encouraged these days because the markets are wide open for the good manuscript."

With much that Mr. Reinstein says I can heartily agree. However, my remark about the "present cut in the number of novels published"

was not based on the same time period as Mr. Reinstein's. The large cut in the number of novels published came in 1948; during that period, as I remarked in my article on "Publishing in 1949" for last year's forecast issue of A&J, the number of novels published in 1948 declined 288 in eleven months, or more than 15%; the further decline was small in 1949, as Mr. Reinstein indicates.

I could possibly agree with Mr. Reinstein that this drop was not due "to the policies of the publisher"; the difficulty is to prevent some quibbling over the term "policies." I am quite certain that publishers would like to have kept going without the cut, but the cut was forced primarily by two factors, the decline in fiction sales in 1946-1948, a decline which affected novels all along the line, from the top sellers to the lowest sellers, and which particularly affected the tremendous rush of the poorer examples of "popular" historical and other fiction; and the increased costs of publishing. Thus editorial "policies" were affected strongly by the economic "policies" of the firms, and the cut set in.

The cut was substantial, and the swing upward has not as yet begun. What it means, then, is that during the last two years between 250 and 350 persons, each year, have not placed novels which they might have placed were publishing "policies" and conditions the same as those which governed acceptances in 1946. A similar number will miss, on the same standard, during each subsequent year until the trend sets the other way, if it ever does.

The novels which were cut out from acceptance were those which the publishers thought would not achieve a sale financially satisfactory. Among those novels were, fortunately, many of the imitative kind which had tended to glut the market for popular fiction and aroused the apathy of book-sellers and buyers alike. Among them, too, may well have been the promising early work of a writer with great potentialities. It is difficult to assess this matter, for no one has seen all the manuscripts which were left without a publisher, and the publishers are keenly aware of this problem. But the possible loss may have been considerable. I doubt that we can ever know, certainly.

These figures indicate, at least, that a writer with a novel has a somewhat smaller chance to place his work than he had two and three years ago—but only if that novel is likely to be regarded by the publishers as having a small potential sale, either because it is inferior or imitative work or because it has a small market, whether quality or not. If a writer has a novel of a good potential

(Continued on Page 21)

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TIPS FROM OUR READERS

REPLENISHING THE CUPBOARD

. . . By **SHIRLEY POLLOCK**

My six year old Susie tossed the afternoon mail in my lap. I thanked her casually before I noticed that one of the large envelopes had been torn open.

"Susie, how come?" I asked.

"Oh, I opened that one," she replied nonchalantly.

"But, darling, you shouldn't open other people's mail!"

"I know, Mommie, but it's just one of those letters you wrote to yourself. That doesn't count, does it?"

I suppose my writing will be cubby-holed like that for the rest of my life. It never can be more than a spare-time occupation, for even when the three little girls are grown, won't I still be the minister's wife with a thousand and one church and civic activities crowding my calendar?

Indeed, I'm not complaining! I've sold what I have as a result of my every day family and community living. The two go hand in hand as companionably as lovers. Writing is an engrossing creative tonic that gives me a wholesome balance. My home and children, my city and church, yes, and even my dog give me the "I was there, wasn't I?" material.

Although I'm just a part timer, I find my mental cupboard needs replenishing almost as often as my kitchen larder. And so that it might never be bare, I have systematically tried to keep it restocked. How?

First, I have tried to identify myself with the nearest writer's club that would have me. My present source of greatest stimulation or prodding is a fortnightly Creative Writing Group. There's nothing like this candid criticism of fellow writers to keep me both humble and exalted. It's the only woman's society I have known that can meet for four evening hours without gossiping. We give full play to woman's craving to talk by talking about ourselves, our sales, and our four-star dreams. It's give and take in the raw. It's a purging that any writer needs to save him from growing rank. (Either meaning, as preferred.)

Another method of keeping my cupboard full is through continual study, either locally or by correspondence. During the war years, I indulged in a night school writer's course. I'll admit I was disappointed in the actual class sessions, but the contacts with other students, an occasional idea aired, even the routine of attendance added up to an intangible lift toward better production on my part.

I've also enlisted in two correspondence courses. The first was on filler writing. This turned out to be a rather extensive criticism of ten submitted fillers and a listing of possible markets for them. I've sold only three, but what I learned through that initial contact with a mimeographed study course launched me in the writing field.

Now I am occupied with a very extensive short-story course that already has more than paid for

itself by added sales I have made through the new techniques learned. You can't possibly have a Mother Hubbard cupboard while you are digging for a professional critic.

Then I am also convinced that no writer can afford to go without at least one writer's magazine to buoy up his spirits. I've tried them all and recommend "*The Author and Journalist*" as tops—no soft soap intended, either. It's professional without losing the common touch. The Handy Market List is just that—handy.

My writer's cupboard is kept full by daily jottings, too. Even when twenty-four hours pass without any time for real writing, I steal minutes to jot down a subject, a description, a newly-coined phrase. My ideas are most prolific while I'm ironing, so I keep cards and pencil handy.

And if I didn't jot down the funny little expressions, the perpetual questions, and the wild tales of the youngsters as they happen, my family articles would be minus both humor and local color. Like the other evening when four-year old Bonnie returned from the Community House movie and I asked her if she had been a good girl.

"Oh, yes. I was a good girl, Mommie. I just let my tears cry when the guns went bang, bang!"

It's fine if you can sit down and write in a despondent style when you are feeling on top of the world; that takes real artistry. Until I can depend upon myself to produce like that—shedding tears, laughing like a clown at the flit of a thought—I'll stick to my everyday jottings to keep my cupboard full.

SHIFTING GEARS

. . . By **PAT FEY**

Once upon a time writing was fun. I wrote what I pleased when I pleased. I just aimed to make enough to ease the strain of higher food costs on the budget. I was satisfied with \$10.20 extra a month. One month I made \$49 in two days and quit writing until the budget pinched again. There were many zero months when I did not write a line because I had no urgent need for a few extra dollars.

Now writing is a grim business. I support myself and my young son. I devote no more time to making \$200 a month than I did to making \$20. Once I sold 50 fillers in 18 months. Now I sell almost twice that number every month.

How does one shift from low to high speed? By changing working habits.

I talked my grocer out of four empty baby food cartons. I lugged them home, cut off the flaps reinforced the inside partitions with brown kraft

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tape, glued the boxes together and set them on end on my desk. 96 little pigeonholes 2½" x 2½" x 4½" stared me in the face.

I know over 300 markets for fillers. I picked out the 96 that I thought offered the steadiest markets and wrote the names on little stickers. Each sticker was glued to the bottom edge of a pigeonhole.

I bought 30c worth of 3 x 5 scratch pads, sharpened a dozen pencils, and cleaned my apartment. I went through all the drawers, pulled everything out of the closet, and pecked in every box and suitcase. I was looking for ideas, for those vagrant notions that had come to me at odd moments and been jotted down on anything handy such as cancelled checks, doctors' prescriptions, margins of magazines, old manuscripts, and rent receipts, and then mislaid. Every unsold idea I turned up was written down on a separate sheet of 3 x 5 and popped into the pigeonhole of the most likely market. Any idea for which there was no logical market went in the waste basket. If I found a rough draft that had possibilities, I rolled it up and stuffed it into a cubbyhole. As I worked I kept thinking up new ideas. Each was written on a single sheet and promptly assigned to a market.

When I was finished, I knew how many ideas I had on hand and to what markets I was to send them. In the past I had made 60% of my total sale to *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*. Now when I sit down to work I look at those pigeonholes first. If there are six or more ideas in either hole, I work them up and mail them out.

In the past 26% of my sales had been jokes. After I work up my kinks and hints, I work on jokes. Since each joke idea is already assigned to a market, it is a simple task to slant it for that market as I type it. If I have any time left after the jokes, I work on anything else that strikes my fancy.

No longer do I sit down at my desk wondering what to do next. I don't have to ruffle through piles of odds and ends looking for an idea to write up. I don't let myself be sidetracked into spending days polishing up a little gem that will only bring a dollar. I don't let myself do half a dozen rough drafts for different articles and finish none of them. If by the time I have reached the second page, a rough draft refuses to jell, I throw it away. If it sounds good, I begin typing my finished manuscript after I finish a page of rough draft. That way I make any changes while they are still fresh in my mind.

I have learned to discipline myself and my writing to my financial profit, but I have lost something, too. I have to hurry my ideas too much. I am rarely satisfied with them, but I cannot take time to let them age. I throw away ideas that would require too long to work up, discard ideas for markets other than the ones I am concentrating on at the time, and I have lost my zest for discovering new markets and trying to sell them. Once I sent 111 contributions to *Reader's*

Digest before I made a sale. Now I would probably try four times and quit, to concentrate on less difficult markets. I do my best to please the editors, but I have to be realistic about what my best is.

As I say, writing isn't fun any more. It is a grim business.

TOPPING OLD TIMERS

By BESS POWERS JOHNSON

A short while ago, I was employed by a local weekly newspaper, when a human skeleton was unearthed in the county. I was sent to cover the story. Undoubtedly it was an Indian skeleton because of the articles found in the grave. I learned the facts from the Sheriff's office and the men who found it, but curiosity wouldn't let me stop there. I contacted all the "old timers" to be found, I read history, I went to the place myself, and finally produced a short interesting news item for my employer.

My notes, gathered from the first settlers of the county, gave proof of an Indian burying ground on the site of the grave. This led to more interviews with first settlers, more history reading of local events, and finally I wrote a lengthy article. My employer snapped it up; it was reprinted by several other local papers.

But from the notes gathered from those "old timers," I have written three lengthy articles, which sold to *Naylor and Company* and were printed in *Epic-Century Magazine*. "The Legend of Seminole,

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I CAN GET IT WHOLESALE

... By **GEORGE E. JONES**

There's a wealth of power—and a power of wealth—in your Uncle Sammy's three-cent postage stamp. I know. Conservatively, I'd say that fifty per cent of my published articles have been the result of mail order interviews. But—and it's magnitudinous—a writer contemplating likewise must give the man with the check book material as colorful as one of Carmen Miranda's chapeaus, as sparkling as a bottle of rare champagne. His copy must be as crackling crisp as a newly minted saw-buck, as fresh as the freckled faced smart aleck next door.

There isn't an editor in the business who wants to pick up a manuscript which leaves him as cold as a mother-in-law's kiss. He can spot encyclopedic, warmed-up left-overs faster than the sleight-of-hand writer can filch them.

Mine is no magic formula; I have nothing up my sleeve. Here's how it works for me. Come on along.

I haven't seen a motorcycle race for more years than I can remember. But, through all the mist and haze, I've always retained a lively interest in sports. When Sports Parade hit the stands in April, the editor sent out an SOS for material. I queried him about such a piece. Sure, he mailed back, he'd be interested. How about two features for his September issue, in fact.

Quick as that, I mailed a letter to the secretary of the American Motorcycling Association in Columbus, Ohio, requesting the latest material on the sport. And, how about some good action shots, huh? I find that good pictures, while they might not bind a sale, certainly don't hinder its chances. The secretary sent me a bundle of material, mostly about the annual 200-mile championship race held at Daytona Beach. There were several action shots enclosed.

I got busy, turning out 1,500 words of copy. "Handlebar Hotfoot" was the result. The editor

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BOZENKILL
DELANSON, N. Y.

had set a two week deadline, so I had to rush with the other article, a piece on greyhound racing.

I airmailed a letter to the publicity director at the West Flagler Kennel Club, in Miami, Florida, who is a friend of several winter seasons spent in Florida. By return airmail, special delivery, he sent me a dozen action shots. I wrote to the State Racing Commission in Tallahassee, asking for latest figures on attendance, mutuel handle, and other pertinent data. I sent a letter to a greyhound owner in California. He told me what he knew about the defeat of the greyhound proposition out there. I queried the editor of *Coursing News*, official publication for greyhound owners, and received a complimentary copy. Out of all this correspondence I was able to build a 2,000 word article, "To The Dogs," beat the deadline by one day, and wait for the check.

It came, for both articles, with both of my features in the September issue. Two feathers in my literary bonnet—two bylines in one issue. What's more, Kidwell, the editor, wants any good stuff I can send him for future issues. It pays to be kind to the hand that feeds you.

Farm Quarterly, a lavishly illustrated magazine, had just made its bow. I always hop onto the new magazines because, invariably, the editor is in need of material. R. J. McGinnis, its editor, was no exception; he needed stuff. I quizzed him about a story on Karakul sheep, the black sheep from which broadtail, caracul and Persian lamb furs are produced. We batted a few letters back and forth until we got in line on exactly what he wanted.

Between you and me, I had never seen a Karakul sheep. But I did happen to know a

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Karakul sheep rancher in California. From him I received the technical data I needed. Inasmuch as the article was to be a "how-to," so that the reader upon completing the story could go out and buy himself a buck and two ewes and set himself up in business, it had to ring of truth. I wrote to the Karakul Fur Sheep Registry in Friendship, Wisconsin. I wrote to Washington; the Department of Agriculture sent me reports. All this grist went into the mill. Out of it came a 5,000-word article, which appeared in the Spring '47 issue of *Farm Quarterly*.

About this time I read an item somewhere of the Chinchilla, the little fur bearing rodent with the fabulous price on its head. I selected *Country Book* as a possibility. The editor was receptive to my suggestion. Immediately upon getting the go-ahead I wrote to an editor in California. I had done some writing for him. He steered me into a Chinchilla rancher living in Denver. The rancher enclosed circulars on the care and feeding of Chinchillas, their habits, price, origin, and accompanied this with a nice selection of photos.

The published article must have sounded convincing not only to the editor, but to several readers as well. I received half a dozen letters requesting further information on how a man or a maiden with money could get into this profitable sideline.

I saw my first chinchillas two years after I had written the article. They were being displayed in a store window.

In "Dead Men's Empire," an article of mine which appeared in 44 *Western* (205 E. 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.), I wrote about a western town I had never heard of until the Barstow, California, Chamber of Commerce sent me literature on old ghost towns in the Mojave Desert. But I gave the piece the old convincer—gore running knee-deep down the alkali-covered street. Joe Simpson staggering out of Red Dog Saloon clutching his guts, splattering lead.

I was able to parlay all this material into a half dozen western fact articles, for *Big Book*

Western, *Fifteen Western Tales*, and *Star Western* of the Popular Publications chain.

Had I been west? Four times, but not to the places I had written about.

I noticed an item in our local newspaper right after the war. A disabled veteran, dissatisfied with the hand the army had given him, developed one of his own, then began manufacturing them for other amputees. All I had to work on was the veteran's name, and his hometown. I wrote a letter, saying I was interested in his story as a feature for a magazine. He mailed me the details gladly, in a three page letter.

I pumped life into the facts and was able to make an appealing story. "A Hand For A Hand" was the result. *Veterans Magazine* took it, and the editor set some kind of a record for promptness for I was cashing a check within three days.

This gives you a rough idea. A three-cent postage stamp, a few kind words, return postage, a promise of a copy of the magazine in which the article will appear, and many, many thanks do the trick.

But don't get the impression that this mail order angle is all beer and skittles. I'm not battling 1,000 per cent with my stuff. Does Otto Graham hit "pay dirt" every time he flips the pigskin? No, chums, he doesn't. When that happy day comes I'll probably have a ten percent handling my entire output. What I did say is that half of my published stuff comes from mail order interviews. The other half is in-the-flesh interviews for sports articles, travel sketches and profiles, which keeps me in short brews, and petrol in the new Mercury, to run down stories.

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LITERARY MARKET TIPS

Mr. Lee C. Hickey is the new editor of *Elks Magazine*, 50 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

Mr. Roy L. Stevens, publisher of *Drive-Inn Restaurant and Highway Cafe Magazine*, 1850 S. Manhattan Pl., Los Angeles 6, California, reports that he is temporarily out of the market due to lack of sufficient advertising.

A note from *Baptist Leader*, 1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 3, Penn.

"In anticipation of a larger magazine, we have accepted more manuscripts than we can currently publish, now that economies have dictated a reduced number of pages.

"At present a backlog of manuscripts takes care of the needs of *Baptist Leader* for the next ten months.

"With the passing of months this surplus supply will be reduced and *Baptist Leader* will again be in the open market."

Harrison Publications, 201 West 52nd Street, New York 19, report that they too are overstocked at present.

Mary E. Monze of the editorial office of *The American Home*, 444 Madison Ave., New York 22, advises: "Our schedules are complete for many months ahead, and we do not wish to obligate ourselves further at this time. Thus, we are unable at present to consider manuscripts."

Furniture World, 127 East 31st Street, New York City 16, over the signature of Helen McEntyre, reports, "We seldom use material other than staff material, or contributions from the Far West, where our circulation is very limited."

Salt Water Sportsman, 136 Federal Street, Boston 10, Mass., Edited by Henry Lyman, advises that the publication is devoted to salt water sport fishing along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine through North Carolina, and stories concerning other areas can not be used. Reports are prompt, and rates depend on material but average around 1½¢ on publication.

The American Photographic Publishing Company has moved to 607 Guardian Bldg., St. Paul 1, Minn. This firm publishes the magazine, *American Photography*, as well as many books on the same subject. Rates are from 1½¢ up, on publication. Mr. D. A. Purchase usually handles manuscripts. The firm was formerly located at 353 Newbury Street, Boston 15, Mass.

At Fiction House, 670-5th Ave., New York 19, note the following changes:

Jerome Bixby has replaced Joe Callahan as editor of *Jungle Stories*, *Two Westerns*, and *Frontier Stories*. Mr. Bixby has also replaced Paul L. Payne as editor of *Planet Stories* and *Action Stories*.

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Audubon Magazine, official publication of the National Audubon Society, is now paying for articles and photographs, for the first time in the 50-year history of the magazine.

John K. Terres, managing editor, at Audubon House, 1000 Fifth Ave., New York 28, writes concerning his needs:

"Published bimonthly, we average about seven full length articles of 1500 to 2500 words in each issue, for which payment ranges from \$15 to \$75. We pay \$3 each for the one-time use of photographs; \$10 for the cover picture. Photographs with articles are desirable, but not necessary.

"No fiction or poetry. *Prefer writers to query first on article subjects.* Articles must be about birds, mammals, plants, insects, wildlife conservation and its relation to forest, soil and other natural resources. Articles about wild pets are desirable, but not about domestic animals (cats, dogs, live-stock, etc.); wild animals and their relationships to each other and to their environment; life histories reports on animals, either from field research or study; personalized bird or other animal biographies; wildlife of a particular region; articles on local wildlife conservation projects; picture story or illustrated-text story (animal tracks, marine life, birds, flowers, etc.); *biographical sketches of living naturalists are particularly desirable*; 'how-to-do' articles on wildlife photography, establishing sanctuaries, community forests, school nature projects, etc.; personal experience article in bird-attracting (supplying food, water, planting cover, birdhouses).

"Payment on acceptance. Report within two or three weeks."

A new trade journal, *Art in Flowers: The Floral Design Monthly*, 855 Avenue of the Americas, New York 1, desires the following listing: Feature articles of interest to retail florists and greenhouses only. Length, to 1500 words. Sales promotion ideas for fillers. No payment. Winifred Carrier, Editor.

Jungle Stories is in need of short stories, not novelettes, of the African jungle.

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The Author & Journalist

Baseball Stories, edited by Jack O'Sullivan, is bought up for the present.

Wings, the air pulp at Fiction House, has been discontinued.

Frontier Stories no longer needs novels of 22,000 words; the market is for short stories 2500-9500 and novelettes 10,000-15,000.

Lariat Story Magazine has changed from a bi-monthly to a quarterly. It needs 10,000-15,000 words at present.

Howard Browne has replaced Raymond A. Palmer as editor of the Ziff-Davis pulps, *Fantastic Adventure*, *Amazing Stories*, and *Mammoth Western*. The address is 185 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 1.

Mr. Browne reports that none of the magazines now want novels longer than 40,000 words.

Two magazines, *Blue Ribbon Western* and *Complete Cowboy Novel Magazine*, have been suspended at Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Church St., New York 13.

At Columbia, *Sports Fiction* has changed from five times per year to bi-monthly publication. Both *Real Western Stories* and *Famous Western* are overstocked on novelettes at present.

Address for *Trailways Magazine* is now 135 So. LaSalle St., Chicago 3. The needs are for articles 2000 to 2500, rather than 1500, which describe places and things of interest to the traveler and vacationer in the U.S. Articles should be accompanied by 15 to 20 8x10 glossy photos. *Trailways Magazine* also buys 4x5 and larger kodachromes for use on the cover.

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by Margaret A. Bartlett

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Putting the "Ghost" into Articles

... By RANDALL R. HOWARD

It has been reported to me that many writers feel that it is unethical "to do a ghost article." As for myself, I'll admit that during my earlier years in general magazine writing, I was much prejudiced against any form of the ghosted article. And today, even after having sold many of such articles to trade and class publications, I still believe that there are grounds for strong arguments on both sides.

As I understand it, this is the basic question: Does the writing or the publication of a ghosted article represent either an unethical or an unfair practice?

Admittedly, this question is highly controversial among writers. Hence it is not my purpose, in this article, either to condemn or to defend ghost writing. Rather, I shall try only to understand the "why" of the extensive publication of ghost articles by editors; and also the "how" of their preparation by writers.

Speaking first from the "why" viewpoint, my own present opinions on the subject doubtless have been colored by the fact that I, at several different times, have been an editor of a small magazine. And it has been my experience that an editor seldom does receive an article which, in its original form, will exactly fit his publication. Hence, after the necessary editorial revampings, if the article still does retain the writer's by-line, it may have been, in effect, largely ghosted for him.

Again from the viewpoint of the editor of a trade journal, many of the articles submitted to him necessarily will be based on trade or technical information given out by large companies or trade associations. In many cases it will have required patient effort on the part of a "local correspondent" to gain the release of the material for such an article, and in writing the article he naturally must be given proper source credit. But from the viewpoint of the trade journal editor, the story which he will publish usually will have greater editorial value if it can be credited to (that is, ghosted for) the one company or industrial authority responsible for the release of this material; and especially if the material is at all technical.

When an editor prints a technical article, he wants technical authority behind it. Naturally, an article which is topped by a name prominent in a business circle or a trade will command a higher degree of reader interest. However, some editors today apparently are giving special attention to the possible ethical angle of the ghosted article. That is, the increasing practice of supplementing a ghosted name on an article by a "with" by-line which also will carry the name of the real writing author. Also, the increasing practice of planting the ghosted name at the top of the article without any "by", thus presumably featuring this named person as the source of the facts used, but without any direct implication of article authorship.

My own personal evolution into ghost writing—or devolution, if you should prefer—came gradually through the years. First, as the youthful sub-editor of a small boosting magazine in a western state, I was visited one day by an aggressive young state official working for a reform state water law. His story of the then exploitation of the state's water resources sounded exciting; and I was able to get a so-called muck-raking article into a prominent magazine. The article was wholly my own writing, but it did closely embody the experience and the program of the state official; and I, in essence, thus became his ghost writer.

Another experience came when I entered an article writing contest being staged by the commercial club of the state's largest city. They offered a capital \$1,000-prize for the one winning article, to be printed in an out-of-state publication and adjudged to be of greatest value in boosting the "resources" of the state. One of my articles, describing a dramatic railroad fight for the transportation control of a great "inland empire," reached a New York magazine editor. He replied that the article would be acceptable if he could rewrite it. I agreed, on condition that I see final proof. When the proof of the rewrite came, it didn't seem to me half as good as my original article; but I still was able to red-pencil or modify some of the most disliked parts. And the big prize actually was awarded—for an article in part ghosted for me!

Then another ghosting step when I evolved to Chicago. My first big writing chance came when the editor of a then nationally prominent business magazine liked one of my article ideas, about the "employee suggestion system" of a large company.

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"But of course," the editor stipulated, "the story will have to be rewritten under the by-line of the manager of their Employee Suggestion Department."

Next, a salaried job which included the wholesale writing of for-free publicity articles to advertise the program of a national organization with a semi-humanitarian service to sell. It soon developed that the trade journal editors whom I now contacted also mostly wanted ghosted articles, and it was my job to supply them.

When I again jumped back into general freelance writing, I likewise found that the editors of national trade and technical publications especially wanted ghosted articles. That is, when this form of writing seemed the most effective way to expand the idea for a commissioned article. And this statement is meant to imply that, in my present everyday writing, I often will not know at first whether a planned article either could be or should be ghosted.

For instance, when I started recently to get an article about an important activity of a large company, I found that my chief source of information was a technical expert in charge of a specialized department. But he was overtopped by a "front" vice-president supposed to get all department publicity glory. Hence my "source" knew that he couldn't personally sign a ghosted article. However, he adroitly let me know that he wouldn't object to being quoted directly in a straight third-person reporting article.

In another recent instance, I found that the real traffic management expert with a large company was only a listed "assistant" to the nominal department head who soon would retire. Hence this expert could not talk at all directly about his own company problems. However, he did help me to develop a generalized ghosted article about the chief traffic problems for his entire industry, which of course indirectly included those of his own company. When I submitted back my ghosted article, he surprised me by largely rewriting it, making the article much more emphatic than I had thought he would sanction.

In some companies one must start with the Publicity or Public relations department; but it usually isn't necessary to discuss whether or not the planned story should be ghosted. Also, a company department head often will be able directly to release the resultant article. For instance, once recently I was obliged to meet a rush deadline date; and my company source permitted me to hand-carry back the first rough draft of my ghosted story. Thus, while he was reading and verbally commenting line-by-line on words and facts or point-of-view which he wanted modified, I made corrections on a second copy of the manuscript.

Most often, with a small industrial company, the chief information source for a feature article—whether ghosted or not ghosted—will be either the President or General Manager. For a larger company, it usually will be a top vice-president, a department head or a company technical expert.

After it has developed, through my initial interviews, that my article probably should be ghosted, then I must tentatively pick out the most logical ghostee and get his consent. If a preliminary warm-up seems necessary, one possible step is to use clippings of some of my previously published locally ghosted articles, since they likely will include names of persons he will know. When I do show such a name, I do not feel that it is a

discourtesy toward the ghostee. I usually will frankly say: "In writing this article I worked with Mr. X of XYZ Company. Just as if I were his personal secretary. And then I submitted the article back for his final corrections."

Also, I might further explain: "When I start out to get an article for my editor, I never know exactly what facts or conditions will turn up. Hence, not exactly how the article must be written. If possible, my editor usually likes to feature the name of the person most responsible for the industrial operations which I shall describe. This will make the article more personal and direct, and naturally of greater reader interest."

By this time, my desired ghostee usually will have revealed his own attitude, if he should be opposed to the ghosting plan. But if he hasn't yet made any direct response, I can assume that he likely is favorable, but that his modesty has checked any open assent. But if I still have some doubt, another test is to ask directly for one of his pictures—"to be used with the article."

As an aid in getting material for a ghost article, I take notes on the technical terms and pithy sayings from the ghostee. I may try also to get copies of his possible convention talks; and verbatim reports on convention discussions. And a look at his private file of newspaper and trade journal clippings, to indicate his special interests in trade and technical problems. Also, samples of the office forms he uses in his department; and a file of the setup and standards of his department, and possible new department standards being developed.

When I submit back the first "rough" of my ghosted article, I make it emphatic to the ghostee that I want him to feel free to make any desired changes, probably in pencil right on the manuscript. I ask him especially to check any technical or trade words that he wouldn't naturally use; and to expand any part of the article which he thinks isn't strong enough. It has been my plan to get into the article many of his own language expressions, and also strong statements on his most positive views. In but few instances have such words or statements been cut or toned down by a ghostee; but they often have been toned up and expanded.

As stated, I often personally take back the first rough copy of the ghosted article. Then I sit down with my "source"; and while he is talking I make line by line correction and improvement notes. Thus, in an hour's time, the article can be completely discussed. Then I rewrite the article, editing and polishing as I go, and mail back a carbon of this final revision. With it I send a brief note stating that I shall wait for one day before mailing the manuscript to my editor, to afford my source the opportunity to telephone to me any desired last minute changes. Usually, no telephone response; or maybe the change of only one or two words.

In a ghosted article which will carry the name of an executive of an important company, little descriptive details on his business methods and his personal business philosophy will gain an importance not possible in a straight news report from a "local correspondent." In general, it has been my experience that many editors of trade journals and technical publications definitely do like and want the ghosted type of article. Also I have found that, for some of my own assignments, this type of article has been the easiest and most effective form of writing.

(Continued on Page 21)

HOW TO SELL EVERYTHING

(Continued from Page 9)

persons in that community you "make a hit" with the readers and they, in turn, like the newspaper's city, so much so that they will want to visit the city more frequently. Therefore, they will patronize the stores of the city, a fact that will be appreciated by the newspaper's advertisers. And there's nothing like satisfied advertisers!

It begins with the password "Circulation conscious."

A consideration of first importance is how profitable you can make your feature stories, which are total flops from a business standpoint if they don't yield much after the expense items are extracted. Your object is to keep down the overhead as much as possible and get the highest possible remuneration for your output.

The trick of holding down the overhead is to draw several stories out of one visit to the cities in the circulation area of the newspaper. If you round up several stories in a single day and take a number of photographs for illustrations, you are on the filthy lucre side.

Before you make a trip in your section, arrange visits with a number of cities and communities and make definite appointments for interviews with your subjects, so that you can work in as many interviews as possible without any conflict in time.

First of all, know what you want to ask the people; beforehand jot down notes as reminders; and while you are interviewing obtain plenty of material, for it is far easier to cut your articles than to "pad" them. Besides, "padding" is a writing sin, and editors won't stand for it.

If you are a spare-time writer, you can capitalize upon Sunday and make your trips on that day. Even during pleasure rides on Sunday you can round up a batch of features, by "stopping, looking, and listening." During your travels you probably will bump into considerable material out of nowhere, if you are alert. Alertness and curiosity go hand in hand.

You should remember that every person is not only a potential subject for a feature story, short or long, but can name several subjects for you. So you should talk with a great number of folks, the greater number the better, during your trips in quest of features.

To spare yourself of transportation expense, you may accompany the circulation crews on their out-of-town trips for securing more subscribers. These men leave early in the morning and return late in the afternoon. In their calls from house to house they run into a heavy amount of feature stuff, and they would like to see it in print because it would aid their circulation cause.

The idea is that a person will become a subscriber, or will continue to subscribe, if he, or she, sees himself or his neighbors and friends "written up." And this gives a newspaper a "friendly" and "newsy" atmosphere; in other words, the subscriber feels as if it is *his* newspaper.

Every feature writer should acquire the knack of photography, for a camera is worth its weight in gold for any writer engaged in the production of non-fiction. Editors pay well for pictures, which impart an enormous feeling of reality to the article. The old saying "Seeing is believing" applies one hundred per cent in this case.

In numerous instances the photographs will bring more in payment than the writing itself, and

—this is important—an editor will take an illustrated feature over a pictureless one that is better prepared. The difference is in the photographs . . . proper photographs, not just any pictures.

Most newspapers maintain staff photographers, and if you work closely with the feature editor he will assign a photographer to go along with you and help you out in the way of pictures. Or while a photographer is in the area on another assignment, he may fill your pictorial needs.

But your best bet is to run down a feature as soon as possible; if you wait, some other feature writer may beat you to the draw. That is why it pays to round up a feature and turn it in to the feature editor p. d. q., all the more so if the story carries a news angle.

By all means, employ a news angle if one is available, for the sake of increasing the salability of your material. Even in an historical article you might tie it in with current events, which may make the editor think he can not pass it up.

A news angle to a feature would be an article dealing with a banker who has been elected president of the state bankers association or perhaps head of the national bankers association, as happened in my state. His election to the position would be the news angle, while the feature would concern his rise to greatness in the financial world, likely against handicaps, or maybe his discussion of national and international finances. Another facet would be financial advice. While one article would be a biographical sketch, another could be a personality story. One more could be an account of his home life.

To carry this further, one article could be written for your local newspaper, another could be produced for a newspaper syndicate, one more could be fashioned for a trade journal, and still another could be turned out for a national magazine. All different articles, of course.

By this method you make several times as much money, but, remember, you must have a super-duper subject, of far more than local interest. Paste this query above your typewriter: **WHO HAS DONE SOMETHING?**

In order to facilitate your covering the circulation territory of a newspaper in your feature writing, why not make yourself a notebook with a division for each city or community? List good subjects, with the addresses and the telephone numbers of the subjects as well as some facts about these persons. Also include news items about unusual people and things that are tips for features.

Let that be your reference book.

Whenever you want a salable subject, or know you are going to be in a certain territory, pull open the book and help yourself to a check!

EXPERIENCE

By J. HOWARD GREATHOUSE

I thought I'd be a writer,
And bolster up my pride;
I'd learn the ways of mice and men
By traveling far and wide.

And now that I have journeyed much,
I'm back at home to stay,
To write about the things I knew
Before I went away!

The Author & Journalist

ADVISING THE BEGINNER

(Continued from Page 11)

sale, his possibilities are no more limited than at any time. As Mr. Reinstein points out, the editors of publishing houses and of magazines are always desiring more "good" work; and this "good" may be a judgment of value for a market or it may be a judgment of quality of the work.

2. Some editors are reported in *Market Lists* as practicing the release of supplementary rights. Does an author have to request such release in order to get it?

I am indebted to Mr. David Raffelock, my co-editor of A&J and president of the National Writers Club, for the answers to this question and the following two. Mr. Raffelock says, "When supplementary rights are released by an editor, usually this is done without further formality at the time a manuscript is accepted or paid for. If it is not done, the author should obtain release of desired rights before cashing the check sent in payment."

3. In greeting card *Market Lists* what is the meaning of "ideas," "a sketch is preferable," "submitted in rough dummy form"?

Mr. Raffelock indicates, "Many modern greeting cards make as important use of the drawings used as they do the sentiment or verse. What the markets want are suggestions for decorations, drawings, or gadgets. The contributor is not expected to send the idea in finished form but may send a drawing, if he can draw, or a 'rough dummy,' if his drawings are crude."

4. With a rejection slip of recent date was this instruction: *Send Easter verse March 1; Everyday (Birthday, Get-Well, Congratulations, etc.), April 1; Christmas, June 1. Does this mean that verse is not acceptable if sent on other dates, or do those dates only mark the beginning of periods within which such and such greetings have chance of acceptance? Does this rule apply, generally speaking, to all greeting card publishers?*

Mr. Raffelock replies, "Most greeting card companies have a definite schedule at which time certain specific greeting cards are printed and later offered to the trade. This is not an all-embracing rule, except in the case of rigidly fixed occasions, such as Christmas, Easter, etc. An exceptionally good verse may be purchased at times other than those stated, but as a general rule the publisher wants material sent to meet his schedule, when such is announced. Experiences of writers show that exceptions to the rule justify some 'off-schedule' submissions."

Frances Maule, editor of *Independent Woman*, has sent us new information concerning length of articles and concerning payment for material used in the magazine, which is the official publication of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, 1819 Broadway, New York 23. Articles may now be from 500 to 1800 words. Articles must have special interest or importance to women who earn their own livings—opportunities for achievement by women in new fields, achievements of women in various fields, including community service, current economic, social, and political affairs—all treated from the point of view of the woman who works. Some sketches are used of "personal upgradings." Payment is \$10 to \$35 per article.

February, 1950

GHOST ARTICLES

(Continued from Page 19)

As to whether it may be "unethical" for a writer to do articles in a ghosted form, I assume that this is a question which each individual must answer to himself. And his answer of course will reflect his own personal desires (and maybe also needs) as related to getting the attention of a certain group of present-day editors.

MARKET TIPS

For the benefit of writers wishing to submit manuscripts to *Mademoiselle*, 122 E. 42nd St., New York 17, Ann Aikman, assistant to managing editor, writes our New York correspondent that each month's issue is built around a theme of some sort. Following are the themes as planned for the coming year: January, What's New; February, Jobs and Futures; April, Brides; May, Travel; July, Mothers and Babies; August, College; September, Jobs and Futures; October, Brides; December, Christmas. Articles on fashion and beauty are staff-written. Special needs right now are for good humor pieces and anything that looks good for readers of 18-30 age group.

The American Magazine has moved to 640 Fifth Ave., New York. Robert Meskill replaces William B. Hart as fiction editor.

CONTESTS

The Authors' and Artists' Club of Chattanooga, Tenn., announces that its annual Poetry Contest is now open to poets of all countries. First prize of \$15; second of \$10, and third of \$5 will be awarded, besides six honorable mentions. Poems must not exceed 32 lines, and may be on any subject, in any style. Contestants are limited to two submissions. The title and first line of the poem should be written on the outside of a sealed envelope containing the author's name, and mailed with the entry.

The contest closes May 1, 1950. Names of the winners will be announced on June 7, and prizes awarded. Address all entries and queries to Mrs. Ollie Barnes Dayton, chairman, 4014 Rossville Boulevard, Chattanooga 7, Tenn.

The Nineteenth Annual California Literature Medal Award contest of the Commonwealth Club of California has been announced, with closing date of January 31, 1950. Entries are restricted to books bearing a 1949 original publication date from bona-fide residents of California for the preceding three years. Awards will consist of two gold and five silver medals, in the fields of fiction, non-fiction, children's book, book of poetry. For entry blank, write to Stuart R. Ward, Secretary, Literature Medal Award Jury, Commonwealth Club of California, Hotel St. Francis, San Francisco 19.

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THE DOCTOR

1616 E. 4th St.

Tucson, Ariz.

IT'S CORNY BUT COMMERCIAL

(Continued from Page 10)

Judging from what I have said, it might appear that your chances of selling a program would be remote, since you have no way of knowing about the Board of Directors' meeting in the Juan Doe Soap Company. But your chances are better than you think. In fact, the agencies are now anxious for original material and program ideas, and you are practically certain to find a spot for anything with commercial possibilities.

Here is how the writer works: You check the various programs on the air and see what they are selling. You will find that most of them sell commodities which are purchased by women. If you sell to women, you must have a show that attracts women listeners. Of course, some are slanted toward the male audience. If you are writing primarily for men, your program will be released at an hour when men are home from work.

Women buyers purchase nearly everything for the home, as well as their personal accessories. The programs that appeal to them are myriad, as a day's listening will reveal. Possibly you were thinking of selling cosmetics or breakfast food when your program idea was conceived, but you discover that it will sell soap powder just as well, because the people who buy breakfast foods are the same people who buy Slippery Suds. Therefore, when you approach the advertising agency, you may find that you have exactly what they want.

In the agency you're with a fellow who is just as far from the world of *belles-lettres* as are the directors in the Juan Doe Soap Company. The agency head wouldn't know how to write a radio script, or for that matter anything else. But he has on hand several sets of figures on the ratings of current radio programs. If the rating on a certain type of feature is consistently high, and you're doing a good job with an idea in that field, your chances are extremely favorable. If, on the other hand, you have a program which parallels in appearance a long string of failures, your chances are not unfavorable—you simply haven't any!

The agency is often the best bet, but there are other script markets. In many cases the production manager of a radio station will like an idea well enough to put one of his salesmen on it, or even give it a sustaining play on the air to attract a sponsor. Then there are the transcription companies.

The thing to keep in mind is that, regardless of where or how your show is marketed, it must be commercial. Don't expect a business man, who wouldn't know Aristotle from Saroyan, to become sentimental over your literary art and shell out a lot of his dough for the uplift of humanity or the appeasement of your landlord. Rather, keep in mind the guy who makes soap, and think of new ways whereby you can help him sell it.

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The Author & Journalist

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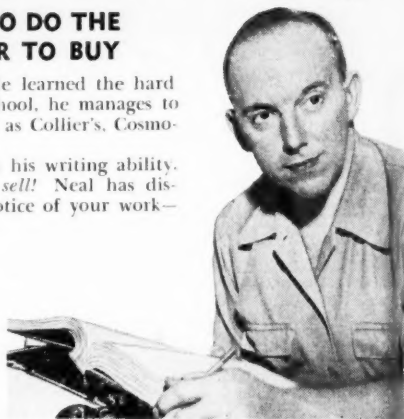
HARRY NEAL is a writer's writer—an editor's writer! He learned the hard way. Although Harry Neal never even finished high school, he manages to get his full share of author's checks from such big magazines as Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Liberty, Esquire and Argosy.

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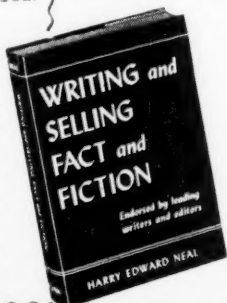


HARRY EDWARD NEAL

Author of "Writing and Selling Fact and Fiction." His stories and articles have appeared in Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Esquire, True Detective, Argosy, Coronet, and many others.

PARTIAL CONTENTS

How To Get Started Writing "Filler" Material. Plotting Technique Made Easy. 30 Ways To Make Editors Sit Up and Take Notice of Your Work. How To Build Strong Characters from Simple Character Traits. Where and How To Collect Facts For Your Article. Make Your Manuscript Look Like A Winner. The Secret of The Beginning, the Middle, and the Closing of Your Article or Story. How To Win The Attention of A Good Agent. How To Write Effective Dialogue. And many more helpful chapters.



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New editor at *Grit*, Williamsport 3, Pa., is Kenneth D. Rhone, replacing Howard R. Davis.

Frances Ullmann has taken over the editorial duties from Harriet E. Davis at *Child Study*, 132 E. 74th St., New York 21.

My Baby, published by Shaw Publications, Inc., has a new address and a new editor. Address is 52 E. 34th St., New York; the new editor is Marie Stark. Needs are for articles and picture stories on child care, age bracket one to six years. Payment is one cent on publication.

Tops, the comic for adults, has ceased publication. *Everyday Hobbies*, published from Los Angeles, has also folded.

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Return Postage Enclosed

By Mrs. Louella Vanderpool

502 James Street,
Amarillo, Texas.
July 14, 1949.

Fiction Editor, Love Tales Magazine,
123 West 4th Street,
New York, New York.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed find a story, "Sauce for the Geese," which I submit for your consideration for Love Tales. It is my understanding, from "Writers' Notes," that your magazine is soliciting work of new authors. I have been writing for less than a year, and have had one story and one feature article accepted.

I will be glad to make any changes you might suggest to improve the story.

Yours truly,
(Mrs.) Marjory Mitchell.

Sept. 1, 1949
502 James Street,
Amarillo, Texas.

Mr. Henry Adolphus, Fiction Editor,
Love Tales Magazine,
123 West 4th Street,
New York, New York.

Dear Mr. Adolphus:

I appreciate your generous offer of \$50 for my story, "Sauce for the Geese," but am sorry I cannot accept it. I'd like to explain my reasons for refusing.

In submitting the story to you, I believe I told you I have been writing less than a year. I had the misfortune to have the first story I wrote accepted, which resulted in my being a hopeless addict to the typewriter. I felt I must have the ability to write—and I exercised that ability. I sent manuscripts to editors with great impartiality. They promptly returned them. Sometimes they came back so quickly I wondered if the local post office were not taking upon itself the criticism and rejection of my brain children. I grew somewhat discouraged, but still remained determined.

I had the further misfortune to sell the first article I wrote, to the local newspaper. This gave me a reputation among my friends as a writer, and I had much to live up to. In the matter of feature articles, the pattern was repeated in the sending off and returning.

I am happily married to an understanding husband, and we have two adolescent children. The family has been very patient with Mother in her little fling into authorhood. When I was a little vague in answering their questions, they chalked it up to my working out another plot. When their clothes remained buttonless, they hunted up another safety pin. When I retired to the privacy of my den, not to be disturbed, they cut the radio so low they had to sit with their ears glued to it in order to hear "Hop Harrigan." On the rare occasions I could find time to make a pie, it vanished like magic, and they were high and generous with their praise, whereas in pre-writing days, they had been critical of the tenderness and flakiness of the crust.

Then came a week of a dearth of ideas for articles or plots for stories. I spent the days cleaning the house, mending the clothes, and doing all

(Continued on Page 26)

The Author & Journalist

LIFE WITH A CORONA

(Continued from Page 6)

man, whose church I had never attended, but whom I knew because he wrote detective stories. He was quite an amateur psychologist. He said, "Tom, you have a mental and emotional block. That deadline has you down. You need to move the mental block by physical means."

Prohibition hadn't quite been repealed, so the clergyman went to a blind pig drugstore and bought me a bottle of Bourbon. That evening I had a date, and the gal and I did away with the Bourbon. Next morning I awoke with a clear brain and wrote like a house afire. I finished revision with days to spare, and a little later Coward wired me acceptance.

The book was *O, Chautauqua*. Grant Wood did the jacket, and Abbott and Dunning almost produced it as a play, and the films almost bought it, and Donald Gordon rated it AAA, and book-sellers who read advance copies sent back orchids to the publisher. It looked like a best seller. But the ad appropriation wasn't large; books need advertising; and it sold 2,700 copies. My next novel, *We Pluck This Flower*, sold 1,200. I returned to short stories.

About now I wrote a yarn called *Blood Secret*, a pioneer story in which a woman killed a man to save her brother, who was a fugitive. Hardy returned it with the shudders; no magazine, he said, would use a yarn in which virtue didn't triumph. Presently I shifted agents, and Syd Sanders returned the yarn with similar shudders. I sent it to a critic. He too thought I had been naughty. So I sent it to twenty or thirty magazines myself. It brought letters from the editors. A powerful yarn, said they, but oh my goodness gracious! At last, *Successful Farming* bought it. I wondered if they knew what they were doing. I guess they did, for that magazine that circulates among midwestern farmers received more enthusiastic mail on that yarn than on any fiction they had published for years.

My third novel, *Ring Horse*, Syd Sanders didn't like and returned to me. I sent it cold turkey to Doubleday, who accepted it with enthusiasm. It had a wonderful press; it sold steadily till the paper shortage of the war, when Doubleday let it go out of print; a few years later Harry Sherman optioned it for picture production; and after *Gus the Great* came out, he bought *Ring Horse*. So I'm one of the few writers who has sold to Hollywood a novel without even a hint of a love story. In writing, anything is possible; never let an editor, agent, publisher—or anyone else—discourage you; if you have faith in something you have written, never give up.

There's not much space left for *Gus the Great*. In 1936, in the middle west, I happened on an

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RETURN POSTAGE ENCLOSED

(Continued from Page 24)

the baking I had time for. I noticed a well-cared-for look in my children that had been absent for many months. My husband took to kissing me goodbye before he went to work, which little ceremony had been dispensed with when it was obvious I was waiting for him to leave so I could get to my writing.

The friendship between the postman and me was a beautiful thing before I started writing. It was my habit to watch for him, meet him at the door, inquire into the state of his health, and discuss the condition of the country. When, several times weekly he brought me my rejected stories, I began to be embarrassed to see him. I continued to watch for him, but from behind the living room curtain, not going outside until he was next door.

Then came the day when six manuscripts were returned at once, and I concluded Fate never intended me for a writer; that writing is a disease like drunkenness, and I had better make a clean break with it before it had me in complete subjection.

Therefore I am refusing your offer to publish my story. If I sell this story, it will give me an impetus to write "just one more." It is somewhat the same idea as breaking off smoking while you have a full pack, or quitting drinking while you have a half-filled bottle—it proves to yourself you are the master of your destiny.

Thank you for your generous offer, and please try to understand my reasons for refusing.

Yours very truly,

(Mrs.) Marjory Mitchell.

WESTERN UNION NIGHT LETTER

Sept. 1, 1949, 8 P. M.

Mr. Henry Adolphus, Fiction Editor,

Love Tales Magazine,

123 West 4th St.,

New York, New York.

Accept your offer for "Sauce for the Geese." Disregard letter under date of today. Am enclosing under separate cover "No Reason to Refuse" for your consideration.

(Mrs.) Marjory Mitchell.

PRIZE CONTESTS

Comedy World, 62 W. 46th St., New York, in conjunction with the Amos 'n Andy radio show, is conducting a search for new young writers of comedy material. The "Amos 'n Andy Award" will be given by this top radio team for the best comedy script in the "Amos 'n Andy" tradition, complete with Sapphire, the Kingfish, and other characters that are part of the show. Deadline for contributions is April 1st. This is the second in the series of incentive-competitions offered by the magazine to uncover writers throughout the country. Winning scripts will be published in the magazine, and a plaque in the name of the comics will be presented to the winner.

PROWOCATION

I sent four lines and they did rhyme;
They had meter and were terse.
The editor replied, in time,
"This stuff could not be verse."

NEW YORK NEWS

Our New York correspondent writes: "Collier's has moved to its new office at 640 Fifth Ave., is wide open for quality stories. Knox Burger, Fiction ed . . . Most book publishers are asking for two things, direct opposites—religious books or sex books . . . William Poole, of Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 432 Fourth Ave., writes, 'We need a popular religious book, either nonfiction or fiction; a strong contemporary novel; a substantial (not humorous) general nonfiction book' . . . Fawcett's Gold Medal Pocketlooks (originals to sell at 25c) are finding it difficult to get suitable books . . . If you have one that you think is a natural, write Jim Bishop, editor, 67 W. 44th St. . . . Two editors have asked for stories of fear, as they say that fear has appeal at this time, due to people being afraid of the future . . . The year started with more optimism than 1949 . . . Even book publishers decided to hold on until the end of March before doing anything drastic, but book contracts may have lower royalties and special clauses . . . It is a good idea for an author to advise a publisher when submitting that he is willing to cooperate . . . It is not an exceptional thing for a book publisher to request the author to secure a few hundred orders on a book as a safety measure . . . There has been a deluge of flying saucer stories . . . If you are considering doing one, don't . . . The historical story is coming in again . . . not war periods, but religious and political periods of action . . ."

Contributors to *Alaska Life Magazine*, 708 American Bldg., Seattle 4, have complained of non-payment for published material. The editor advises us that the magazine is going through a financial readjustment, and that payment may be delayed for several months.

Diamond-Kingston, Inc., 9165 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood 46, Calif., writes that they would be very glad to receive any material from original story to published or unpublished novel, produced or unproduced plays, which have not yet been submitted to the studios, and promise prompt report.

Welcome News, 404 W. 9th, Los Angeles, has been sold, and is now called *Humanist World*, published at 1516 S. Western Ave., Los Angeles 6. Need is for articles on travel, history, biography, essays on cooperative and social reform. Payment upon agreement.

Open Road for Boys, 136 Federal St., Boston 10, is overstocked with fiction at present, prefers nonfiction, 1500-1800. The editor suggests querying for proposed articles.

Fighting Western and *Leading Western*, pulps put out by Trojan Magazines, 125 E. 46th St., New York, are now bi-monthly.

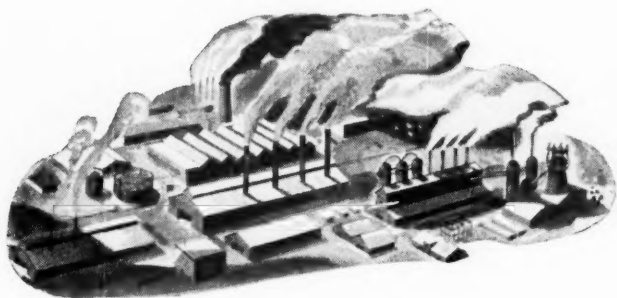
The Woman, 420 Lexington Ave., New York 17, uses sound, informative fact articles of interest to women, with illustrative anecdotes. Dorothy M. Johnson is executive editor. Good rates are paid.

PRIZE CONTEST

The Midwestern Writers' Conference (July 10 to 16, Chicago, will award \$500 for the best ideas in 500 words on the subject *The Book I Should Like to Write*. Prize money will be distributed as follows: 1st prize, \$200; 2nd prize, \$50; 3rd prize, \$50; 40 prizes at \$5 each. Deadline, June 1. Thousands of dollars in other prizes for short stories, articles, poetry, plays, novel outlines, and junior fiction. (See advertisement, page 15.)

The Author & Journalist

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but Coke refreshes*



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Minimum rate of payment at *Toronto Star Weekly* has been upped to five cents. Needs remain the same for feature articles, Canadian appeal articles up to 2000; novels 40,000-45,000; serials 18,000-20,000; short stories 300-4500 in the fields of love-adventure, romance, western, mystery, detective, etc. Address is 80 King St., Toronto, Canada.

Publication of *American Living*, P. O. Box 1151, Los Angeles 52, has been discontinued.

Charles V. Mathis informs us that the Cape May County seaside resort of Sea Isle City, N. J., has become a new publishing center. More than 100,000 copies of magazines and trade journals are mailed from Sea Isle City each month, Mr. Mathis says.

Latest trade journal, the first issue just out to an initial subscription list of 5000 feed, seed, fertilizer and farm supply dealers of the Eastern states, is *The Eastern Feed Merchant*. William A. Haffert is the editor and publisher at Garden State Bldg., Sea Isle City, N. J. Mr. Haffert also edits and publishes *New Jersey Farm and Garden*.

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STOCK RECORDS SIMPLIFIED

(Continued from Page 6)

sheet. If the editor has written a return letter, I make a note of such to the lower right of my big red "R" referring to that letter by date and noting reason, if any, for rejection. The editor's reply (and I really get more replies than I do rejection slips, though for a time I knew hardly a magazine letterhead by sight) is filed in a regular letter file under the appropriate magazine's name. Rejection slips are tossed into the back of my middle file drawer.

Oh, yes, I should have said that all of my circulating manuscripts are placed in an "Out box." There, ready for a quick look at any time, and in the order sent, is every manuscript I may wish to check.

When I receive an acceptance, I pull the manuscript from my "Out box" and mark "ACC" on the cover sheet in large blue letters near the market. The amount of the check is entered together with information when the item will be published, date received, etc. I file the sale.

Though it may sound difficult, I actually spend very little time finding a manuscript. I never fuss with card indexes or files. It takes only a moment to go through my stack of manuscripts (usually around thirty) that are out. What's more, the cover sheet contains all the information I need to market successfully the article or story. Any other method would cause me to maintain a card index plus a special place to hold manuscripts in the mails.

You may wonder why I staple my carbons together with the cover sheet. Here's why: if the manuscript becomes dog-eared, I'll re-type it, and as I always make carbons, the originally stapled ones remind me, for some reason or other, that the manuscript as it now stands needs a re-write job as well. The new carbon copy is treated exactly as the original, except that the old one is clipped to the new, complete with old cover sheet. Several of the original rejecting markets may be good for another try. If so, I have all the information they conveyed at hand without having to dig through card indexes or correspondence files.

For the "Out Box" to which I have referred, the bottom of a shirt box does nicely. The colored cover sheets can be purchased, or, if you prefer, you may use your carbon copy stock and color-code them with art pencils.

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LIFE WITH A CORONA

(Continued from Page 25)

abandoned circus farm; what had been the winter quarters of a circus long dead. The sight did something to me; fired me up, inspired me, if you want to call it that. During the next ten years, off and on, I worked at that novel. I worked at it for two years, when I taught at Grinnell College; I worked at it in lonely cabins in the Rocky Mountains, and all over the Southwest in a house trailer.

We were in Las Vegas, Nevada, when I finished it. The completed manuscript ran 1,400 pages. I sent the last of it off on a Monday, and a week from the following Friday I had a wire from Willis Wing that Lippincott was accepting it with a \$5,000 advance. And two months later, after we had wandered on to a California canyon, I had that telephone call from New York.

So, after twenty-six years of living with a Corona, and putting manuscripts into the slot machine, and getting mainly lemons and a few cherries and a few near misses at bells, I hit the jackpot. You can do it too, and I hope you do.

Sponsoring publisher of *Trailer Life* has changed its name from Trailer Coach Association of California to Trailer Coach Association. The address has changed to 3107 W. 6th St., Los Angeles 5. Gilbert Rich, editor, reports that he needs, in addition to regular articles and fiction slanted toward trailer life, semi-technical articles to give the trailer public more "know-how" on handling trailers—hitches, care of trailer, etc. Payment is 1c-13/4c on publication; glossy photos are purchased at \$1-\$2.50.

H. M. Kanagy has replaced Helen C. Jones as editor of *The Home Desirable*, 836 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago.

Baby Time, Alford Publishing Company, 424 Madison Ave., New York 17, has changed its requirements from 1500-word articles to articles 750-1000 of interest to new mothers. Payment is now \$5.00 per article.

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McCall's Magazine has indicated slight changes in wants. Short stories now run from 4000 to 7500 words and complete novels 20,000 to 25,000. The address is 240 Park Ave., New York.

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